

REMARKS

Claims 1-2 and 6-15 are rejected under 35 USC 112, second paragraph, as being indefinite for failing to particularly point out and distinctly claim the subject matter which applicant regards as the invention, the Examiner stating elements of claims 1, 6 and 12 lack antecedent basis. Claims 1 and 6 have been cancelled, and claim 12 has been amended (consistent with page 6, lines 16-20) to correct such basis. Reconsideration of this rejection is respectfully requested.

The drawings are objected to under 37 CFR 1.83(a) for not showing the dropping system and adjustable dam of claims 13 and 14. Reconsideration of such objection is respectfully requested, as such claims have been cancelled.

Claims 13-14 are rejected under 35 USC 112, first paragraph, as failing to comply with the enablement requirement. While it is believed such claims are reasonably enabled in view of the skill of the artisan in combination with Applicants' teachings, such dependent claims have been cancelled to advance prosecution.

Claims 1-15 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Abe et al 5,575,851. The Examiner states that Abe et al teaches every positively claimed element of the apparatus, that is limiting means which is capable of being movable in a slot and is capable of flowing a fluid there through. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

It will be noted that claims 1, 2, 4, 6, 7, 9, 13 and 14 have been deleted and claim 3 has been amended and presented as the sole independent claim. Support for amended claim 3 may be found for "arranged in a distribution chamber for a coating fluid" from original claim 6; "wherein the at least one limiting means comprises a piston" from original claim 4; "provided with two spaced-apart sealing elements that seal off the piston against the distribution chamber" from page 4, lines 14-16 of the specification as filed; "for supplying a confining fluid between the sealing elements and through the coating slot" from page 4, lines 16-19 as filed; and "for preventing coating fluid material from laterally distributing within the coating slot and for simulating a continuous material web" from page 4, lines 20-21 and 25-26 as filed.

The invention is directed towards a device for adapting the coating width of a coating system comprising a limiting means, i.e., a part that adapts and limits the coated material width. Amended claim 3 specifies wherein the at least one limiting means comprises a piston provided with two spaced-apart sealing elements that seal off the piston against the distribution chamber, wherein the limiting means is movable and is adapted for supplying a confining fluid between the sealing elements and through the coating slot for preventing coating fluid material from laterally distributing within the coating slot and for simulating a continuous material web. Thus, amended claim 3 explicitly requires the limiting means to be adapted for supplying a confining fluid in accordance with the described invention. The invention relates to the limitation of the lateral distribution of a coating fluid material as described, e.g., at page 4, lines 11-13, which is enabled through the capability of applying a separate confining fluid adjacent the edges of the actual coating material, as if the confining fluid were a continuous coated web with the coating material.

Abe et al discloses a die coater with movable deckles that may be adjusted to control the coating width of a coating fluid, wherein the coating fluid (or a cleaning fluid) is passed through a deckle shaft 5 into die manifold 3. Abe et al clearly fails to anticipate the present claimed invention, however, as while the deckles of Abe et al may include fluid tight portions 6, 61 as noted by the Examiner for controlling the coating width, Abe et al fails to disclose any structure that may function as limiting means that are adapted for supplying a confining fluid between the sealing elements and through the coating slot for preventing coating fluid material from laterally distributing within the coating slot and for simulating a continuous material web. There is simply no support for the Examiner's assertion that the limiting means (i.e., deckles) of Abe et al is adapted or is capable of applying a confining fluid there through in accordance with the present invention, as the deckle shafts of Abe provide fluid only into the manifold 3 area from which the coating material itself is coated. There is simply no disclosure in Abe et al of means for applying a separate confining fluid which would function to prevent the coating fluid material from laterally distributing within the coating slot of the die coater of Abe et al. This is not merely an "intended use" recitation, but an actual apparatus limitation. Reconsideration of this rejection is accordingly respectfully requested.

Claims 1 and 3-6 are rejected under 35 USC 102(b) as being anticipated by Japan 10-005663. The Examiner states that Japan '663 teaches every positively claimed element of the apparatus, that is limiting means which is capable of being movable in a slot and is capable of flowing a fluid there through. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As discussed above, the invention relates to the limitation of the lateral distribution of a coating fluid material as described, e.g., at page 4, lines 11-13, which is enabled through the capability of applying a separate confining fluid adjacent the edges of the actual coating material, as if the confining fluid were a continuous coated web with the coating material. Amended claim 3 accordingly explicitly requires limiting means comprising a piston having two spaced apart sealing elements, where the limiting means are adapted for supplying a confining fluid between the two spaced apart sealing elements of the piston and through the coating slot in accordance with the described invention.

Japan '663 does not disclose limiting means in accordance with amended claim 3 comprising a piston provided with two spaced-apart sealing elements that seal off the piston against the coating fluid distribution chamber, wherein the limiting means is movable and is adapted for supplying a confining fluid between the sealing elements and through the coating slot for preventing coating material from laterally distributing within the coating slot and for simulating a continuous material web. Rather than disclose limiting means adapted for supplying a confining fluid between sealing elements of a piston, Japan '663 discloses a die coater with deckles 3 and deckle shafts 2, wherein a cleaning solvent passage is provided on a side of the retreat direction of deckle shafts with respect to the top of the deckles. Cleaning solvent is thus applied in Japan '663 outside of sealing members 23 provided under deckles 3 relative to the coating slot. The claimed invention is accordingly clearly not anticipated by Japan '663 based on this distinction alone. Further, the cleaning solvent applied in the device of Japan '663 would be clearly separated (by the length of the top of each deckle 3 as illustrated) from the coating solution supplied between the deckles, and thus the device of Japan '663 would not be capable of simulating a continuous material web with such separated cleaning solution. The limiting means of the present invention, on the other hand, enables applying a confining fluid adjacent a coating fluid supplied through a coating slot to simulate a

continuous material web. Such limiting means in accordance with the present invention is nowhere disclosed in the prior art. Reconsideration of this rejection is accordingly respectfully requested.

Claims 2 and 7-15 are rejected under 35 USC 103(a) as being unpatentable over Japan 10-005663 in view of Abe et al 5,575,851. The Examiner states it would have been obvious to modify the Japan '663 system by substituting its sealing sheet or deckle with deckle guide with another sealing sheet or deckle with deckle guide such as taught by Abe et al in Figure 7 for the taught advantage of preventing fluid leakage within the die coater. This rejection is respectfully traversed.

As explained above, neither Japan '663 or Abe et al teach limiting means which enables applying a confining fluid adjacent a coating fluid supplied through a coating slot to simulate a continuous material web. Thus, even if the sealing sheet or deckle of Abe et al were to be substituted for the sealing sheet or deckle of Japan '663, the present invention still would not be obtained. Reconsideration of this rejection is accordingly respectfully requested.

In view of the foregoing amendments and remarks, reconsideration of this patent application is respectfully requested. A prompt and favorable action by the Examiner is earnestly solicited. Should the Examiner believe any remaining issues may be resolved via a telephone interview, the Examiner is encouraged to contact Applicants' representative at the number below to discuss such issues.

Respectfully submitted,



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If the Examiner is unable to reach the Applicant(s) Attorney at the telephone number provided, the Examiner is requested to communicate with Eastman Kodak Company Patent Operations at (585) 477-4656.